http://www.ozaukeepress.com/images/101112/rescueSM.png **Club members save PW-S district money by designing, building Apple TV brackets**

For about $30 apiece, the Port Washington-Saukville School District could have purchased the 31 brackets it needed to mount Apple TV receivers in classrooms at Thomas Jefferson Middle School.

As it turns out, it didn't need to, thanks to a group of seventh and eighth-grade students who may well be tomorrow's engineers.

The middle school's engineering club — an offshoot of its successful Project Lead the Way Program, which is designed to foster interest and proficiency in engineering, math and science — designed and manufactured the brackets, saving the district about $930.

More important than the savings, however, was the opportunity the project gave students to put their skills to work engineering a needed product, said Alec Belling, the school's technology and engineering teacher and club adviser.

"This project was really neat because this (Apple TVs) is the newest technology in our district, and the kids are making the parts to support it," he said. "They were excited about it because this was a real-world opportunity for them."

As part of a pilot technology program at the middle school, Apple TV receivers that provide wireless connections between devices like iPads and SMART Boards were installed in several classrooms. The district's technology department handled the wiring, but when it came to mounting the receivers on walls next to the SMART Boards, the technicians were missing some important parts.

That's when they turned to the students in the engineering club.

"We treated this just like a real-world project where the customer came in with a concept and the students had to design it," Belling said.

The district's hardware support technician, Bryan Ryer, met with students and explained what he needed.

The students sketched a design, revised it and built a cardboard prototype. After reviewing the design with Ryer and tweaking it, they began building the blue plastic brackets.

“The kids were really excited about the finished product,” Belling said. “They said it looked just like something Apple would have designed.”

Image Information: THOMAS JEFFERSON MIDDLE SCHOOL engineering club members Talan Howell and Chloe Stevens, both seventh-graders, showed off a bracket used to mount an Apple TV receiver near a SMART Board. Members of the club designed and built the brackets.
Photo by Bill Schanen IV